

Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

E-rate funding for public libraries reaches milestone

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FRANKFORT, Ky. (Nov. 27, 2012) – The education rate (e-rate) federal program, which helps fund Internet and telephone service for libraries and schools, has passed the \$1 million mark in Kentucky in 2012, making it the most successful year in e-rate history for the state.

The \$1,033,398 being allotted to Kentucky's public libraries this year will help ensure libraries are connected to worldwide information networks, regardless of their location. E-rate was enacted by Congress under the Telecommunications Act of 1996, with the program beginning in 1998. Kentucky public libraries have received \$7,146,928 in e-rate funding since that time.

Telecommunications carriers providing international and interstate service and earning above certain revenue thresholds are mandated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to make universal service contributions to fund the program. Kentucky libraries are given money through the Universal Service Administrative Company, not directly through the federal government. The funds come from the universal service charge on every phone and cellphone bill.

"Public libraries leverage these funds to provide their customers with the best possible connectivity. E-rate funds allow libraries to have enough phone lines to handle customer calls, and to support the bandwidth necessary for online job searching, distance learning and access to downloadable audiobooks and e-books," said Katherine Adelberg, e-rate consultant for the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives (KDLA).

E-rate funds provide discounts on monthly telephone and Internet bills. Discounts for Kentucky public libraries range from 40 percent to 90 percent, with the average library receiving a discount of 80 percent.

Discounts are calculated based on two factors: the percentage of students in the local school district eligible for the National School Lunch Program, and the urban or rural classification of the county served by the library.

An annual application process is required for the discounts, but unlike most grants, the process is non-competitive, so every applicant that completes the form correctly receives discounts on phone and Internet services. Each year, \$2.29 billion in e-rate funding is available to libraries and schools.

“We use our e-rate savings to help support Kentucky Libraries Unbound,” said Metcalfe County Public Library Director Rhonda Glass. “We have customers come in daily to learn how to download books.